

The word "purport" comes to us from the Latin "portare," to carry. "Purport" carries a connotation of being a false claim. For example, "The Senator was purportedly attending her daughter's birthday party when she was spotted downing shots at a bar of low reputation."

Falsehood is, indeed, a heavy thing to carry, as it requires a lot of work to make it appear true, whereas truth can simply get away with appearing true because it is true. The reporter of a purported claim is looked at askance even though the word was not originally laden with this dubious connotation. It simply meant the same thing as "reported" or "conveyed." Its use in legal terminology may be the reason it has switched to a meaning more like "alleged," a term with much the same meaning, but with the added connotation of judgements of truth or falsity being deliberately withheld.

Since most claims are expected to state the truth, any indication that truthfulness is not part of a claim seems to render it suspect in the popular imagination, and thus raise suspicions.

Thus, a grifter's purport is to avoid purporting. The last thing he wants to do is raise suspicion, or even neutrality, regarding the truth of his claims.